

2 Baltic Republics Appeal To Yeltsin for Cooperation

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MOSCOW, June 1 — In a dramatic display of solidarity between the Soviet Union's rebellious republics, official representatives from Lithuania and Estonia met today with Boris N. Yeltsin, the newly elected president of the Russian republic, to discuss cooperation.

President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania, stopping in Moscow on his way home to deal with a crisis caused by the Soviet blockade on oil and gas supplies, met privately early this morning with Mr. Yeltsin and Mikhail Bocharov, one of the Russian leader's top advisers. The meeting was confirmed by Mr. Bocharov.

Later in the day, Marju Lauristin, deputy chairwoman of the Estonian Parliament, spoke to the Parliament of the Russian republic and encouraged its members to adopt a declaration of Russian sovereignty.

"We know from our experience what

emerged on the definition of sovereignty, with some seeing it as a symbolic gesture and others as an act of political and economic defiance.

Mr. Yeltsin's program calls for virtually full economic autonomy, giving the Russian republic the right to set price for products and resources — most significantly for its oil and gas. The Russian republic — stretching from Europe across Siberia to the Pacific — accounts for 90 percent of the Soviet oil output and 70 percent of the natural gas.

But it is still unclear, as the republic struggles to define its rights, how far it will be able to go in putting them into effect — for instance, whether it will be able technically and physically to control the pipelines and railroads that link the Soviet regions.

Given these problems, the significance of the meetings today was largely symbolic, but still highly charged, at a time when other Soviet republics are asserting their independence. This week, for instance, Moldavia formally supported Lithuanian rights to independence.

Yeltsin Takes Different Line

Mr. Yeltsin's hourlong meeting with President Landsbergis was another signal of his determination to strike a course that is independent from official Soviet policy, even at odds with it. Since Lithuania declared independence last March, President Landsbergis has been shunned by President Mikhail S. Gorbachev and most oil and gas supplies to the republic have been shut off.

The Kremlin's harsh treatment of Lithuania — the republic that has made the most abrupt break with the Soviet Union — is an issue at the Washington summit meeting, where United States officials continue to press Mr. Gorbachev to start a dialogue with the Lithuanian leaders.

The Soviet leader continues to insist that the Lithuanian Parliament must first agree to suspend its declaration of independence. The Lithuanians have so far refused to do this.

In Washington, Mr. Gorbachev again dismissed the leaders of Baltic independence movement as "adventurists."

The hourlong meeting between Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Landsbergis was first announced by the Lithuanian news agency, Elta. A spokesman said the talks had opened "long-term prospects for the future."

Mr. Bocharov, President Yeltsin's aide, declined to give any details on the discussions and indicated surprise that

Do Estonia and Lithuania have a new ear in Moscow?

contradictions, what economic, social and political difficulties lie ahead," she said. "We want to tell you not to be afraid to move forward."

Speaking in the name of the Estonian lawmakers, the official congratulated Mr. Yeltsin on his election and, to applause, offered him a bouquet of flowers.

Yeltsin Urges Direct Links

Calling for direct links between the Soviet republics, Mr. Yeltsin said this week that Russia should negotiate its first contacts with the three Baltic republics, which have gone the furthest of the 15 republics in their attempts to break out of the Soviet Union.

"I consider that Russia should first conclude a treaty with the Baltic republics and then, afterwards, with all the rest who so desire, on an equal basis," he said after his election.

A debate on Russia's sovereignty will begin next week, after Parliament completes the election of Mr. Yeltsin's deputies.

But different views have already

the private talks had been made public. He said the meeting did not take place at the Lithuanian representation in Moscow, an indication that it was held at Mr. Yeltsin's initiative.

Estonians Support Russia

In her speech to the Russian Parliament, the deputy chairwoman of the Estonian Parliament said the Estonian people identified with the Russian desire for sovereignty. "A people that has awakened, that feels itself the genuine master on its own land is a people that gathers incredible energy and happiness," she said. "We wish you to enjoy the happiness of creating yourselves."

"We have both struggled against our heavy heritage," she said. "We were equally repressed by the frightening

regime that deprived both of our people of the free expression of their will, by a policy which has its roots in the past, and deprived the Estonian people of 50 years of freedom and kept the Russian people in stagnation.

"We respect and recognize the rights of the people of Russia. We hope you understand our desire to be a free and independent state."

The official said her speech was at the initiative of the Estonian Parliament, which is looking to a newly sovereign Russia as a future partner, she said, not only in trade but also in "humanitarian areas."

"A lot of Russians are living in Estonia," she said. "And they are waiting for guarantees from their mother country."